

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP65B00383R000200050003-4

87th Congress }
1st Session }

COMMITTEE PRINT

MON NOV 20 1961 AM

ORGANIZING FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

FINAL STATEMENT

OF

SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON, CHAIRMAN

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY MACHINERY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE



NOVEMBER 15, 1961

Printed for the use of the Committee on Government Operations

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON : 1961

76805

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FINAL STATEMENT

of

SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON

Chairman, Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery

Free men are locked in a struggle being waged on the earth's continents, in the depths of its seas, and in the reaches of space.

Our Communist foes acknowledge no bounds except those imposed on them by expediency. They draw Twenty-Year Plans portraying a Communist utopia in 1981—while they build walls around their unwilling subjects in 1961. In their pursuit of power, they debase language itself. "Democracy," in their lexicon, becomes the rule of the few over the many. "Peace" becomes the surrender of free men to Communist domination.

The question is this: Can free societies outplan, outperform, outlast—and if need be, outsacrifice—totalitarian systems? Can we recognize fresh problems in a changing world—and respond in time with new plans for meeting them?

The requirements of national security press ever more strongly on our resources. Can we establish a proper scale of priorities which separates the necessary from the not really essential?

Program choice grows ever harder. Can we establish the right mix of military and economic aid? How are we to choose between competing multi-billion dollar weapon systems?

Presidential control over foreign policy and defense programs becomes more difficult. How may the globe-girdling programs of the national security departments and agencies be harnessed on behalf of the Presidential purpose? How can we assure their efficient execution?

Standards of performance adequate for quieter times will no longer do. The Presidency and State and Defense and the rest of our government must now meet new tests of excellence.

Some two years ago, the Senate of the United States established the Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery and asked it to make a nonpartisan study of how well our government is now staffed and organized to meet the challenge of world communism.

The Subcommittee solicited the views of the ranking authorities in our nation. Its staff prepared background studies on the problem of the inquiry, and the Subcommittee held extensive hearings, during which distinguished witnesses gave generously of their counsel.

Over the past year, the Subcommittee has issued a series of staff reports with detailed findings and suggestions for corrective action. The studies have found an interested audience in the government, in the academic community, and among private citizens. Many of the recommendations contained in these reports have been adopted by the administration; others are being weighed.

The Subcommittee inquiry is now ended.

Certain broad conclusions have come home to me from our study.

First: We need a clearer understanding of where our vital national interests lie and what we must do to promote them

Faulty machinery is rarely the real culprit when our policies are inconsistent or when they lack sustained forward momentum. The underlying cause is normally found elsewhere. It consists in the absence of a clear sense of direction and coherence of policy at the top of the government.

Unless our top officials are in basic agreement about what is paramount for the national interest - what comes first and what comes second -- there is bound to be drift and confusion below. This has been so under every administration.

In our system, two men bear the heaviest responsibility for giving our national security policy focus and structure. One is the President. The other is his first adviser - the Secretary of State.

A clear and reasoned formulation of national policy, and its effective communication downward, is the prerequisite of successful delegation and coordination.

There is still much to be done in defining our vital interests and developing a basic national policy which supports them.

Second: Radical additions to our existing policy machinery are unnecessary and undesirable

Our best hope lies in making our traditional policy machinery work better - not in trading it in for some new model.

The Subcommittee inquiry brought to light scores of plans for novel changes in the policy process. They include proposals for a so-called First Secretary of the Government who would stand between the President and his Cabinet chiefs, large planning staffs attached to the White House or the National Security Council, cold war strategy boards and councils of wise men.

Such proposals have certain weaknesses in common: They try to do at the Presidential level things which can better be done by the departments and agencies; they violate sound administrative practice by tending to interpose officials between the President and his key Cabinet officials; they rest on the mistaken assumption that the weaknesses of one organization can be cured by creating another.

In fact, any proposals for net additions to our present national policy machinery should be greeted with a basic skepticism.

This is particularly true of suggestions for new committees. Committee-killing, not creating more committees, remains the important job.

Properly managed, and chaired by officials with responsibility for decision and action, committees can be useful in helping make sure that voices that should be heard are heard. But a very high percentage of committees exact a heavy toll by diluting the authority of individual executives, obscuring responsibility for getting things done, and generally slowing decision-making.

Third: The heart problem of national security is not reorganization--it is getting our best people into key foreign policy and defense posts

Good national security policy requires both good policy-makers and good policy machinery. But organizational changes cannot solve problems which are really not due to organizational weaknesses.

More often than not, poor decisions are traceable not to machinery but to people—to their inexperience, their failure to comprehend the full significance of information crossing their desks, to their indecisiveness or lack of wisdom.

Fourth: There is serious overstaffing in the national security departments and agencies

The caliber of the national service is impressively high.

But like so many large private organizations, our government faces the problem of people engaged in work that does not really need doing. The size of the national security departments and agencies has swelled out of proportion even to the increased number and complexity of our problems.

The payroll costs, although formidable, are less important than the price paid in sluggishness of decision and action. Unnecessary people make for unnecessary layering, unnecessary clearances and concurrences, and unnecessary intrusions on the time of officials working on problems of real importance.

Many offices have reached and passed the point where the quantity of staff reduces the quality of the product.

Occasional swings of the personnel axe, accompanied by much fanfare, yield more in headlines than in lasting results. The fight against overstaffing must be waged each day anew.

Fifth: The career services should be made better training grounds for posts of national security leadership

Our career services are not producing enough officials with the large executive talents, the breadth of experience, and the width of perspective needed in top foreign policy and defense posts.

A program for improvement should give officials of exceptional promise much greater flexibility and latitude in job assignments; it should stress movement of personnel between agencies; it should offer more opportunities for advanced training of the kind made available by our most efficient private corporations.

And above all, we require higher salaries at the top of the civil service and at the sub-Cabinet level. The present pay scales are dropping further and further behind those obtaining in private life—not only in business but increasingly also in the academic world. These inadequate salaries discourage too many able people from entering government service and encourage too many to leave it.

Sixth: We should reduce the needless barriers which stand in the way of private citizens called to national duty

Our system of government uniquely depends upon the contributions of distinguished citizens temporarily in high government posts, who come from and return to private life—the Stimsons, the Forrestals, and the Lovetts.

In time of hot war, we let no obstacle stand in the way of getting our ablest people to work in the government. But in this cold war, whose outcome will be equally fateful for the nation, we tolerate pointless impediments to public service.

The present conflict of interest laws are a prime example. We will always need regulations to deter or penalize the rare official who tries to use his public office for private gain. But the laws now on the books

are archaic--most go back to the Civil War. They are more responsive to the problems of the 1860's than the 1960's, and they often make it unduly hard for outstanding people to accept government posts. The job of updating these laws should be completed.

Seventh: Used properly, the National Security Council can be of great value as an advisory body to the President

The true worth of the Council lies in being an accustomed place where the President can join with his chief advisers in searching examination and debate of the "great choices" of national security policy. These may be long-term strategic alternatives or crisis problems demanding immediate action. The Council provides a means of bringing the full implications of policy alternatives out on the table, and a vehicle through which the President can inform his lieutenants of his decisions and the chain of reasoning behind them.

The pitfalls to be avoided are clearly marked: At one extreme, over-institutionalization of the NSC system—with overly elaborate procedures, and the over-production of routine papers. At the other extreme, excessive informality—with Council meetings tending in the direction of official bull sessions.

Eighth: No task is more urgent than improving the effectiveness of the Department of State

In our system, there can be no satisfactory substitute for a Secretary of State willing and able to exercise his leadership across the full range of national security matters, as they relate to foreign policy. The Secretary, assisted by his Department, must bear the chief responsibility for bringing new policy initiatives to the President's desk, and for overseeing and coordinating our manifold foreign policy activities on the President's behalf.

State is not doing enough in asserting its leadership across the whole front of foreign policy. Neither is it doing enough in staffing itself for such leadership.

State needs more respect for comprehensive forward planning. The Department as a whole attaches too little importance to looking ahead in foreign policy, and is too wedded to a philosophy of reacting to problems as they arise. The Policy Planning Council is not now in the mainstream of policy-making.

State needs more officials who are good executive managers—and who are broadly experienced in dealing with the full range of national security problems which now engage the Department. The administration of foreign policy has become "big business." This places a high premium on the ability to manage large scale enterprises—to make decisions promptly and decisively, to delegate, and to monitor.

This need for "take charge" men is particularly urgent down through the Assistant Secretary level and at our large missions abroad. Round pegs in square holes are a luxury we cannot afford.

Ninth: We need a stronger, not a weaker, Bureau of the Budget

Rich as we are, we cannot do all the things we would like to do to assure the national safety and provide for the general welfare.

The job of the President is to rank the competing claims on our resources in terms of their national importance—to distinguish between what cannot wait and what can wait.

The budgetary process is the President's most helpful tool in establishing such an order of national priorities, and in seeing to it that the operating programs of the departments and agencies conform to these priorities.

In this task, the President needs the help of a Bureau of the Budget staffed still more strongly than it now is with officials who can interpret agency programs in terms of their contributions to the President's over-all goals.

The danger is always present that Bureau members will become champions of their own, rather than the President's, program preferences. A strong Bureau requires strong Presidential control.

Tenth: The Congress should put its own house in better order

Although the Subcommittee inquiry was directed toward the Executive Branch, there is clearly much room for improvement on Capitol Hill.

One major problem is fragmentation. The Congress is hard put to deal with national security policy as a whole.

The difficulty starts with the Executive Branch. Except in the State of the Union and the budget messages, it presents national security information and program requests to the Congress in bits and pieces.

The present mode of operation of the Congressional system compounds the problem. The authorization process treats as separable matters which are not really separable. Foreign affairs, defense matters, space policies, and atomic energy programs are handled in different committees. It is the same with money matters. Income and outgo, and the relation of each to the economy, come under different jurisdictions.

There is no place in the Congress, short of the floors of the Senate and the House, where the requirements of national security and the resources needed on their behalf, are considered in their totality.

The need is to give the Congress, early in each session, better opportunities to review our national security programs as a whole.

For its part, the Executive Branch can take the initiative by presenting our national security requirements "as a package", with dollar signs attached. To put these requirements in better perspective, the Secretaries of State and Defense and other ranking officials could make themselves available for joint appearances on the Hill.

The Congress should move in parallel. At the beginning of each session, it can encourage its authorizing committees to meet jointly to take testimony on the full scope and broad thrust of our national security programs. A closer partnership can be urged upon the revenue and expenditure committees. And parent committees can undertake to secure more comprehensive briefings on programs before dividing them up among the subcommittees for detailed analysis.

One last point: Too many people believe that the cards are stacked in favor of totalitarian systems in the cold war. Nothing could be more wrong.

Democracies headline their difficulties and mistakes; dictatorships hide theirs. The archives of Nazi Germany told a story of indecision

and ineptitude in policy-making on a scale never approached by our own Nation.

The words spoken by Robert Lovett at the first hearing of the Subcommittee are still the right words:

While the challenges of the moment are most serious in a policy-making sense, I see no reason for black despair or for defeatist doubts as to what our system of government or this country can do. We can do whatever we have to do in order to survive and to meet any form of economic or political competition we are likely to face. All this we can do with one proviso: we must be willing to do our best.

